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Ideology and Film in the Spain of General Francisco Franco

It is generally accepted in international historiography to make use of the results of the investigations carried out by film historians. It can be justified from various aspects that a film amplifies the dimensions of the historical analysis.¹ The aim of this paper is to show the main features of the manifestation of the Spanish Franco regime's (1939-1975) ideology in its film policy and to display how the prevailing opinions and attitudes towards national history lined up the cinematic culture by converting it into one of the most substantial means of the state propaganda. To examine it more closely, we are going to study which state supported topics appeared in the films of this period and how they connected with the Francoist administration. We should lay the main emphasis on the practical implementation of the official film policy in the fields of film industry, legislation and decision making,² owing to the fact that this procedure came into being with the purpose of aiding the accomplishment of the ruling ideology.

It is important to highlight that in this paper we will concentrate only on feature films, since their compound atmosphere and their hidden messages prove to be more complex, interesting and thought-provoking than in the case of documentaries. This latter genre has never been as popular as the feature films, because it can hardly be regarded as a form of genuine entertainment; state supported documentary films in totalitarian countries usually take advantage of the direct propaganda in an excessive manner, so their effect on society does not meet the expected impact. Therefore, if we talk about film policies in a dictatorship, feature films are more suitable to be examined, documentaries should be drawn into the investigation only if they are unavoidable for some reason, or film makers shot only these types of pictures in a given period (like the Spanish Civil War, for example).

During this investigation we can raise questions that may add new and useful information to the thorough description of the Franco regime's society and political-ideological self-definition. This method is acknowledged now in various countries, thirty years ago international investigations in the field of hispanic studies have „opened up” towards disciplines that go beyond the traditional research areas, such as philology, literature and history. In the 1990's various independent disciplines have

¹ See also: LÉNÁRT (2010): 159-171.

² Because of the size restrictions of this essay we will deal briefly only with the first aspect of these three main areas. The PhD thesis of the author of this article examines the presence of the ideology and the propaganda in all fields of the Francoist film policy.

appeared as auxiliary sciences in the scope of hispanic studies in Western Europe, the United States and Latin America, like, for instance, psychoanalysis, gender studies, cultural history, ethnography and film history. During the past decades the logocentric cultural image has evolved into a visual cultural image, where the cultural heritage of a nation has become a primary constituent of the investigations. From these fields the audiovisual representation, that is, the film is the one that, due to its multidisciplinary concerns, can be used from various points of view and combined with the other areas.

As a consequence, our task is not identical with compiling the history of Spanish cinema. We have no intention to examine those films that are the most important ones for aesthetical reasons, we make allowances only for those movies that are significant from the aspects of history, politics, ideology and propaganda.

The Francoism had a wide temporal extension (1939-1975), but the basics of the regime's official ideology were being formed throughout the Spanish Civil War and the following two decades. As a matter of fact, the crucial and determinant decisions in film policy were made in the 40's and 50's as well, but from 1959 until the end of the dictatorship various politicians modified the basic principles. The gradual „softening“ in the 1960's corresponded to the changing mechanisms of the regime's internal and foreign policy. Taking into consideration these observations, from our film sources we should select those movies that were made between the Civil War and the end of the 1950's. From the 60's and 70's we lay particular stress only on those processes, people and films that were pertinent in relation to state policy.

Film became one of the most powerful instruments of the Spanish propaganda. Before discussing the movies, it is essential to identify the ideological driving forces of the Franco regime in order to be able to analyse the messages of the films. In this case we have chosen seven ideological components that were relevant with reference to the film policy as well: a) focus on those stages of the Spanish national past that were considered by the regime as glorious and exemplary; b) *Hispanidad* and the notion of the Spanish superior race (master race); c) hegemony of the Castilian language (*castellano*); d) Catholicism and the Catholic Church; e) the army that guaranteed the order and the perpetuance of the governing power; f) the sacredness of the family and the woman as the Mother of the nation; g) the constant presence of the enemy as a consequence of the international conspiracy of Communism, Bolshevism and the Freemasonry.

All these aspects appeared in various sectors of the regime's film policy: 1.) the institutional organization and direction of the film industry, which was treated from the beginning as one of the most important branches; 2.)

the legislation concerning the film production; 3.) establishment of the practice of obligatory dubbing, which led to the controversial situation that the public could watch both Spanish and foreign movies only in Castilian language; 4.) the articles and promotional campaigns relating to films and the system of the official film awards; 5.) introduction of an extremely rigorous censorship, where the ecclesiastical members were even more active in the committees than the political delegates, adopting resolutions that were often unexplainable, abnormal and incoherent.

The aim of the Francoist film policy was to create the real *national film*, but it was never explained clearly what they meant on *national*. As there was no explicit definition, the alloy of the regimes's main feature films can indicate what the nationalist New Spain thought of itself. We can adduce genres and subgenres that included and transmitted the aforementioned seven ideological components.

According to an opinion that describes the film policy of the 40's, the duty of the new Spanish cinema was „to spread the ideology of the Falange and to create a culture that has unambiguous Hispanic roots, maintain and develop its rich spiritual tradition, steady Catholic faith and racial characteristics.”³ Most films had to assist this settled conviction, but later this principle started to fade. Their common specific feature was that, with some exceptions, they were made between 1939 and 1959. In the modified political climate of the 60's the priorities of film policy were altered, the ideological content and the tone of propaganda were overshadowed by the artistic aspects. During the Franco regime, in the same way as in the dictatorships of Italy and Germany, the films that offered neutral and indifferent entertainment outnumbered those ones that represented the state ideology and propaganda. Nevertheless, all Spanish movies had great importance for the state.

Hereinafter we will present in detail the most significant motion pictures of the Francoist film industry and we will also touch upon the most important topics. We will mention the main categories and refer to some revealing examples.

Race

The most substantial and powerful result of the Francoist film policy was *Race* (*Raza*, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1942); it cannot be included exclusively in any of the categories, because it is closely attached to all of them simultaneously. *Race* was the essential and ultimate Francoist movie. Daily and weekly newspapers guaranteed its constant publicity and promotion during a whole month in 1942, while the *National Union of Entertainment* (*Sindicato Nacional de Espectáculo*) considered *Race* as the best

³ Quoted by: GARCÍA SEGUÍ (1989-1990): 17.

film of the year, and they nominated it to represent Spain at the Venice International Film Festival.

The story of the film is the loyal incarnation of the ideological collage of the Franco regime and, at the same time, the idea of the *Hispanidad*. The main characters are the members of the paradigm Francoist family: the father is a hero who sacrifices his life for the country and his principles, the mother holds together the family and is respected as a saint, while the young ones submit themselves to their military, political and ecclesiastic vocation.

In the original film novel⁴, written by General Franco himself, the author sketched the descriptions of events quite roughly, he laid the main emphasis on the conversations. He made several grammatical and spelling mistakes, and sometimes he confused the names of the characters: the grandson of an old man appears as his own son on the next page. According to film historian Román Gubern nobody dared to correct these errors, because they were made by the Caudillo.⁵ However, the scriptwriters of the adaptation paid great attention to amend these mistakes. José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, first cousin of José Antonio Primo de Rivera (the leader of Falange who was executed in the first year of the Civil War) was appointed to direct the movie version.

The novel was first published in 1942, at the same time when the film was released, with the sub-title „*Collection of anecdotes for a film script*“. The name of the author was Jaime de Andrade.⁶ In 1943 a journalist mentioned in his article that open secret that the author was actually Francisco Franco, but it was only in 1964 when the real identity of the pseudonym 'Andrade' became official: the Caudillo submitted an application for his admission to the *General Society of Spanish Authors* (*Sociedad General de Autores de España*) under the name of Jaime de Andrade.⁷

Race, considering its origin and plot, can be regarded as the idealized autobiography of Franco. The last name 'Andrade' is an allusion to one of his ancestors⁸ and all the primary components of the story have something to do with the general's past, family and moral precepts. The main dialogues consist of explicit ideological and propaganda messages, they are imbued with the praise of patriotism, the Spanish nation and the Hispanic

⁴ The book's official denomination is „film novel“ (in Spanish: *novela cinematográfica*); it is clear that the author wrote it with the intention of adapting it into film, but it was far from being a real screenplay. For this reason, it is an inaccurate, though generally believed statement that Franco was the film's scriptwriter. The Caudillo wrote a film novel that could be developed easily into a screenplay by the director and his colleagues.

⁵ GUBERN (1977): 7. In this book Gubern analysed the film and its shooting as well. The following film historians also wrote about this topic: CRUSELLS (2000): 205-216; REIG TAPIA (2002-2003): 97-121.

⁶ ANDRADE (1942).

⁷ CRUSELLS (2000): 205.

⁸ GUBERN (1977): 12.

race, the supremacy of Catholicism and the constant detraction of the enemy. The original film novel is a dramatized political pamphlet and the film is its visualized adaptation. Considering the most important propaganda films of the world, we may affirm that, from the aspects of the declared purpose and the unanimous message, *Race* is one of the most perfect pieces that dictatorships have ever made.

The main character, José Churruca (Alfredo Mayo)⁹ is the *alter ego* of Francisco Franco: he is a nationalist officer who goes through the same ranks of the military hierarchy as the Caudillo did some decades earlier; nevertheless, as *Race* is an idealized story, José achieves some of those goals that Franco has never been able to realise during his career. He is the second child of a Galician dynasty whose family tree abounds in heroes and martyrs. José has two brothers and one sister: the republican Pedro (parallel figure to Franco's real brother, Ramón), Jaime, who becomes a priest after graduating from the Naval Academy and Isabel, who marries an officer. Pedro has always been a strange young man with a distorted and treacherous personality, so it is not a surprise (according to the Francoist judgement) that the leftist ideas can lure him successfully. Pedro senior, the head of the family, loses his life in a heroic battle in Cuba during the Spanish-American War in 1898¹⁰, while the mother, Isabel, is a model mother and model woman. At the beginning of the Civil War José falls into republican captivity, he is executed, but he miraculously survives (Franco also recovered from a serious wound that was taken for mortal). After this amazing „*resurrection*” he joins the troops of Francisco Franco and dedicates his life to the nationalist cause. During the war the republican soldiers shoot Jaime to death; partly as a consequence of this tragedy, the leftist Pedro finally regrets his faults, changes for the „*better*” (he delivers a solemn monologue about the Hispanic race) and even helps a spy of the rebels to complete her mission. The film concludes with the Parade of Victory in 1939 chaired by the Caudillo himself.

General Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera are present in the film continuously through quotes and pictures placed on the walls and the tents, which means that the author wrote himself and his idol into the story as well.

The film of Sáenz de Heredia begins with this subtitle:

„*The great Spanish blockbuster, sponsored by the Council of the Hispanidad*”.¹¹

Franco, in the dedication and the prologue of his novel, puts his intentions into words in a more explicit way (these sentences were not used in the film, they figure only in the published film novel):

⁹ Alfredo Mayo was a frequent participant in the war films of that period, he became the number one fictional hero of the nationalist film industry.

¹⁰ According to the Hungarian historian and hispanist Iván Harsányi: „*Franco carved a father for himself who was to his own taste*”. ORMOS-HARSÁNYI (2001): 272.

¹¹ „*La gran superproducción española, patrocinada por el Consejo de la Hispanidad*”

„For the youth of Spain, who opened the way before our revival with their own blood. You will experience the scenes of the life of a generation; unprecedented episodes of the Spanish Crusade, presided by the nobility and the spirituality that are characteristics of our race. A noble family is at the center of this work, a faithful image of those Spanish families that have resisted the hardest ravages of materialism. Sublime sacrifices, heroic actions, characteristics of generosity and acts of solemn nobility will march past before your eyes. You won't find anything that is affected. Each episode will extract various names from your lips. Many! Because this is how Spain and the race are.”¹²

All the dialogues and monologues of the film are messages of propaganda that reflect the essential components of the Franco regime's ideology: the enemies are cruel and vicious, they want to ruin the whole country; Catholicism and the Catholic Church protect and patronize the human soul and goodness; being part of the army is not just a job, but the noblest and most perfect vocation; family ties are transcendent bonds; the Spanish – American War was the tragedy of the whole nation, but those Spaniards who participated in that fight are all martyrs; the Spanish Civil War was a battle between the Good and the Evil. The country is above all: when José's brother-in-law wants to desert in order to defend his family at home, the main character dissuades him with a patriotic speech. The threads of the story are centered around honor, loyalty, duty and pride sanctified by the Catholic spirituality. The monologues of José and his parents on the past evoke the mosaic of the glorious Spain. In one scene, José Churruca adds: *„God loves the Spanish nation best”*.

The title of this film, with regard to the frequent recurrence of the word *„race”* in the vocabulary of the regime, is the comprehensive nationalist denomination of the Hispanic people. *Race* includes everything that is linked with the Francoist ideology, but it overabounds with scenes that carry the overt propaganda to excess and enter the category of *kitsch*.¹³

The creation of *Race* was the result of the explicit purpose of the regime and the *Council of the Hispanidad* to design the archetype of patriotic films, which, at the same time, legitimized the nationalist insurrection of 1936. There had been a previous attempt too, but *The Balears Cruiser* (*El crucero Baleares*, Enrique del Campo, 1940), after the approval of the censors, was

¹² *„A las juventudes de España, que con su sangre abrieron el camino a nuestro resurgir. Vais a vivir escenas de la vida de una generación; episodios inéditos de La Cruzada española, presididos por la nobleza y espiritualidad características de nuestra raza. Una familia hidalga es el centro de esta obra, imagen fiel de las familias españolas que han resistido los más duros embates del materialismo. Sacrificios sublimes, hechos heroicos, rasgos de generosidad y actos de elevada nobleza desfilarán ante vuestros ojos. Nada artificioso encontraréis. Cada episodio arrancará de vuestros labios varios nombres... ¡Muchos!... Que así es España y así es la raza.”* ANDRADE (1942): 1, 4.

¹³ For instance, the constant reappearance of the cross or its silhouette, or when the characters are staring at the camera with tears in their eyes while they are delivering a lofty soliloquy about the Hispanic race and the superior Spanish nation.

banned and all the copies were destroyed by the Ministry of Navy; they considered that the film was not respectful enough with the Navy because of the romantic threads of the story and the casual style. The Spanish National Film Archive preserves only the original script. This film, which narrates the combats of a cruiser during the Civil War, was the first production shot entirely in Spain in the post-Civil War period, the earlier movies since 1936 were usually made in Italy and Germany.¹⁴ On the contrary, *Race* received all sorts of support from the state and the press.

In 1950 *The Spirit of a Race* (*Espíritu de una Raza*, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia) arrived at the Spanish cinemas, which was not a new film, but the recut and redubbed version of *Race*.¹⁵ The crew of the *NO-DO* newsreel was in charge of the modifications without consulting Sáenz de Heredia. According to the official explanation, these changes were introduced into the film because of the necessary „technical synchronization of the dialogues and effects”. One of the most important alterations was the new dubbing: instead of the original actors, in *The Spirit of the Race* we can hear those artists who took part in the Spanish dubbing of *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, George Cukor, Sam Wood, 1939) in Metro Goldwyn Mayer's studio in Barcelona. The director of the new dubbing claimed that „the General has never been satisfied with the previous version”.¹⁶ Completely new dialogues were added, it is obvious in several scenes that the movement of the lips does not correspond to the voice. The new version was adapted to the circumstances of the Cold War, all those elements were erased from it that had any reference to Fascism, Falange and anti-democratic topics: raising the arm as a form of salute, mass parades and marches, conversations that praised the extreme right and anti-American remarks. Anti-communism emerged as the new global enemy. One sentence illustrates perfectly the main difference between the dialogues. While in *Race* we can hear the following with reference to the insurgent troops: „They always win the battle against the arrogants”, in *The Spirit of the Race* it sounds this way: „They always win the battle against the Barbaric and atheist communists”.

Race might have been the first and chief illustration of a series of Spanish

¹⁴ GUBERN (1986): 88-89.

¹⁵ In the censors' report it is stated as well that this was not a new and independent film, but the altered version of *Race* „due to technical motives”. Archivo General de la Administración, Cultura, Caja 36/03379, Expediente 09689.

¹⁶ The DVD edition of *Race*, published by the Spanish National Film Archive in 2002, gives detailed information on the circumstances of creating this new version; the „Extra” contents of the disc were compiled by the research fellows of the Film Archive. In addition, the following pages examine the main differences between the two films: CAPARRÓS LERA (2000): 15-31, and CRUSELLS (2000): 210-216; Román Gubern also touches upon this topic throughout his cited monograph about *Race*.

propaganda films, but afterwards they didn't shoot any other movies within the same pattern that focused exclusively on the notions of Hispanidad and race. The reason for this is not certain, it is quite probable that the film makers didn't dare to deal with this subject, because they couldn't surpass Franco's film, their efforts might have seemed to be simple and low-level copies. There was a rumour about a possible sequel to *Race*, to be written by Francisco Franco and directed by Sáenz de Heredia, which would have focused on the *Blue Division*¹⁷, but this film was never brought to effect, and there is no official documentation about this plan.

The Civil War

According to General Franco and the Spanish Catholic Church, the Civil War was a Crusade against Communism, because the legitimate republican government was in the service of international Bolshevism and, therefore, Christianity, unity and nation were in danger. The so-called *Crusade Cinema* (*Cine de Cruzada*) had the mission to justify the armed revolt of 1936. In these films the real heroes of the Spanish nation belong to the nationalist troops and some common characteristics are present constantly: the Falange, the Falangist anthem (*Cara al sol – Facing the sun*) and the patriotic monologues of soldiers, priests, women and children. From the end of the 1950's in these types of films appeared the idea of national reconciliation, where the republican soldiers were not portrayed exclusively as vicious criminals, but also as human beings who were deceived by the foreign malevolent forces (usually communists).

The most important examples of this category are: *The Front of Madrid* (*Frente de Madrid*, Edgar Neville, 1939), *The Siege of the Alcazar* (*Sin novedad en el Alcázar / L'assedio dell' Alcazar*, Augusto Genina, 1940)¹⁸, *The Red and the Black* (*Rojo y negro*, Carlos Arévalo, 1942)¹⁹, *The Sanctuary Doesn't Surrender* (*El Santuario no se rinde*, Arturo Ruiz Castillo, 1949) and *Piece Will Never Begin* (*La paz empieza nunca*, León Klimovsky, 1960).

The enemy

One of the recurring convictions of the Franco regime was that the country is full of communist secret agents and their allies, who are constantly on the watch in order to demolish the New Spain. The nationalist forces believed that they had to keep under surveillance the potential

¹⁷ The Blue Division (*División Azul*) was a unit of Spanish volunteers between 1941 and 1943 that Franco sent to the Eastern Front to help the German troops.

¹⁸ It was an Italian-Spanish coproduction with two official titles.

¹⁹ This film has nothing to do with Stendhal's novel, the title refers to the colours of the flag of Falange.

sources of danger and protect the nation from them. Communism, Anarchism and Freemasonry were used as synonyms in the ideology of the Franco regime, so all those films can be included in this category that dealt with the portrayal of the enemy. In many cases there is an overlap with those movies that belong to the type of Crusade Cinema, because most war films do not conclude in 1939, they usually follow the lives of their characters into the next few years as well. Furthermore, many films may be attached to both categories as in the Civil War, naturally, the enemy always appears. Anti-communism is present in all those movies that are about the Civil War, the army, the Church, together with the xenophobia towards those people who do not belong to the Hispanic race.

Themes about anti-communism and bolshevik agents who infiltrate into society composed a popular subgenre in the United States during the Cold War, in Spain the film makers followed that trail as well.²⁰ The personality of those Spaniards who serve the Soviet Union is usually not completely depraved, the course of events might be reversible, provided that the Spanish patriots are able to convince their fellow countrymen. It is remarkable that the word „hell” figures in the title of many of those films where the story is set in the Soviet Union or other communist countries. In all cases, the antagonists are communist agents (groups or individuals) who seek to destroy the achievements of the New Spain, by infiltrating into the Blue Division or the Spanish society.

Some of the movies of this category are: *Wedding in Hell* (Boda en el infierno, Antonio Román, 1942), *A Cross in Hell* (Una cruz en el infierno, José María Elorrieta, 1954), *The Patrol* (La patrulla, Pedro Lazaga, 1954), *Ambassadors in Hell* (Embajadores en el infierno, José María Forqué, 1956), *The Loyal Infantry* (La fiel infantería, Carlos Arévalo, 1959) and *The Aces Strive for Peace* (Los ases buscan la paz, Arturo Ruiz-Castillo, 1954), this latter one starred by the Hungarian football player Ladislao Kubala.

The past

According to the investigations of Spanish film historian José Enrique Monterde, approximately 473 films were made in Spain between 1939 and 1950, but only 20 of them can be labelled as ideological historical dramas.²¹ They are collectively known as *papier-mâché movies* (*cine de cartón piedra*), with reference to the material of the set and the decorations. The movies of the Cifesa studio are the main examples of this category.

Even though those films are the most important ones for dictatorships

²⁰ In the US science fictions used the themes of foreign invasion as well; UFOs, giant ants and body snatchers were metaphors for the soviet agents.

²¹ MONTERDE (2007): 90-91.

that represent the state propaganda, in all political systems the main duty of the movies is to isolate the public from reality for at least 90 minutes. Thus, the films that contain direct propaganda and are based upon explicit ideological grounds are usually in a minority even in totalitarian regimes. Nevertheless, these films comprise the messages of the governing powers and they get the highest subsidies as well. The editorial of *Primer Plano* (the most influential film journal) gave voice to the official opinion in 1942, stating that the genre of historical films was the most important one, because it contributed notably to the formation of the spirit of the nation. For the Spanish people the representation of their national values was primary, so producers and directors had to show the foreign countries as well how glorious had been the journey of Spain that led the nation to its actual state.²² The previous year, Pío García Viñolas had written an article to the same journal, where he declared that the biggest deficiency of the Spanish film industry was that it didn't make enough movies about the national history.²³ Furthermore, the general editor of the journal *Radiocinema* asserted: „We are creating *Racial Cinema*, which points out our beauty and our religious, heroic and slightly adventurous spirit. A Cinema that has deep Spanish roots. *Romancero Cinema* with solid classic contours. Here we have the life stories of our seamen, saints and poets. *El Cid* and *Hernán Cortés* would deserve a film. And our great *Queen Isabella*, *Cardinal Cisneros*, *Cervantes*, *Lope*.”²⁴ The same article added that film could be forged into a real national weapon, it could acquaint the Spanish greatness with the whole world, so it might have served as a model for other countries' own development. During the 40's *Primer Plano* and *Radiocinema* published several editorials and articles of this type, they all discussed the same topic: adapting for the screen the story of national heroes, saints and events of the glorious past was essential if they wanted to show the Spanish people and the world that Spain represented the highest stage of the human civilization, and it was the driving force and the inseparable part of the history of the world.²⁵

To accomplish this mission, the assistance of loyal film directors, scriptwriters, production designers and studios (in the first place, Cifesa and Suevia Films) was required, because they had the necessary imagination, influence and professionalism.

It was not a Spanish Francoist particularity to adapt the original scripts and the classic works of the national literature into historical films, in the Italy of Mussolini and the Germany of Hitler this was a popular genre as well. Dictatorships gave a symbolic importance to their past by interpreting

²² Necesidad de un cine histórico español 1942. Page without a number.

²³ GARCÍA VIÑOLAS (1941). Page without a number.

²⁴ ROMERO-MARCHENT (1940): 7.

²⁵ See: SAINZ Y DÍAZ (1940).

history in a peculiar way, they tried to elevate national cinema to high artistic levels and justify its usage as a means of propaganda.

José Enrique Monterde specified eight main characteristics of historical films²⁶, we highlight the five most relevant ones: 1.) The heroic *caudillo* is at the center of the story and the Spanish history, he is above everyone else, his personality is free of contradictions and is ready to sacrifice his life for God and for the country. These characters may be considered as the predecessors of Franco. 2.) The unity of the country is realizable only on the basis of the Castilian traditions, it is essential to get rid of all those impediments that endanger this unification (like the class conflict, religions that are different from Catholicism, ambitions of the national minorities for regionalism or separatism, etc.). 3.) Demonization of the „other” and the creation of the image of the „permanent enemy”. These enemies can be internal (separatists, democrats) or external (communists, atesists, freemasons). 4.) Selective reference to the national past: frequent allusions to those events that are regarded as glorious by the regime and the omission or falsification of those periods that are taken for disgraceful. According to these movies the following topics have unanimously positive appreciation: the *Reconquista* (Reconquest), the Catholic Monarchs’ intentions of unification („forgetting” about the atrocities against the Jews and the Moriscos), the conquest of America and the evangelization of the „Barbaric” people (passing over the extermination of the natives), the reign of Philip II (without reference to the problems that arose during the period of the Habsburgs), the war of independence against Napoleon and the loss of the Latin American colonies (concealing the abuses of the former motherland). 5.) Taking advantage of that nature of the Spaniards that they are not familiar with their own history (according to Monterde), the film makers, with the help of the narrator, can explain the historical facts and events from their own point of view, misinterpreting or falsifying the truth.

The most relevant films of this group are: *Holy Queen* (*Reina Santa*, Rafael Gil, 1947), *The Princess of Ursinos* (*La princesa de Ursinos*, Luis Lucia, 1947), *Madness of Love* (*Locura de amor*, Juan de Orduña, 1948), *Agustina of Aragon* (*Agustina de Aragón*, Juan de Orduña, 1950), *The Lioness of Castile* (*La leona de Castilla*, Juan de Orduña, 1951) and *The Dawn of America* (*Alba de América*, Juan de Orduña, 1951).

The Catholicism

The Spanish Catholic Church, which had a decisive role in the control over the regime’s society, made several pejorative statements on motion pictures until the end of the 1940’s, it accused them of being the weapons of Satan and

²⁶ MONTERDE (2007): 92-93.

the cause of the human immoralities. Bishops and priests addressed inflammatory speeches and wrote offensive articles against film studios and distributors, sometimes they even incited their believers to acts of violence against cinemas. However, from the 50's it became clear for the clergy that they couldn't elude or eliminate movies, so they took a 180-degree turn: on the occasion of masses and in newspaper articles they tried to guide the public, convince them to watch only those films that were morally acceptable and they even encouraged them to watch the adequate ones.

The National Catholic Association of Propagandists (Asociaci n Cat lica Nacional de Propagandistas - ACN de P) made up the most influential religious section of the regime, it was convinced that the dangers of the communist threat and the decomposition of the Spanish society were imminent. Similarly to the dozens of state supported religious organizations, it was crucial for ACN de P to extend its influence over the whole society and the mass media, like the press, radio and cinema. The association was active already during the Civil War, they wanted to gain victory over the souls through the censorial work as a contribution to General Franco's triumphs on the battlefield. The post-war period was the perfect time „to use the power of the film to serve God and the country”.²⁷ For this very reason they started to render financial assistance to the realization of film projects, because they presumed that „the torrent of foreign films that inundates our country will never speak the language of our country's feelings and traditions”.²⁸ ACN de P and the groups of Catholic Action (Acci n Cat lica) entered into film industry and realized that they could make financial profit as well; from that moment they urged the wealthy practising Catholics to invest their money into the foundation of a great national Catholic film studio. They soon became aware of the difficulties of setting up a company that supervised both the production and the distribution, so they endeavoured to disseminate their influence through other film studios.²⁹ *Aspa P.C.* and *Ariel* had strong ties to Catholic associations, while *Procura*, *Filmayer* and *Exhibidores Unidos* were under the control of *Opus Dei*.³⁰ The *Valladolid Religious Film Festival* (Semana de Cine Religioso de Valladolid)³¹ guaranteed from 1956 that Spanish and international religious movies could reach the professional film makers and the public as well.

A large number of the Catholic films discussed the story of saints and apostles, while other movies were about those people whose life was changed for the better with the help of the religion and the Church. The

²⁷ MONTERO (2002): 177-178.

²⁸ Ibidem, 180.

²⁹ HEREDERO (1993): 78-82.

³⁰ L PEZ - ARAMIS (2006): 314.

³¹ Today it is known as *Valladolid International Film Festival* (Semana Internacional de Cine de Valladolid - SEMINCI).

Catholic faith was omnipotent and the main characters were often innocent kids who could sing in an angelic voice.

Some of these productions are: *Reckless* (Balarrasa, José Antonio Nieves Conde, 1950), *The Lady of Fátima* (La Señora de Fátima, Rafael Gil, 1951), *God's War* (La guerra de Dios, Rafael Gil, 1953), *The Kiss of Judas* (El beso de Judas, Rafael Gil, 1954), the *Miracle of Marcelino* (Marcelino pan y vino, Ladislao Vajda, 1955) and *Messengers of Peace* (Mensajeros de paz, José María Elorrieta, 1957).

Since the mid-50's the glory of those films that contained explicit propaganda started to decline, they didn't appeal the public anymore. The financial results of Cifesa studio, which had produced most of the historical movies, showed a negative balance, while in the movies that dealt with the Civil War appeared the national reconciliation. In the 1960's José María García Escudero took the lead at the *Directorate General of Cinematography and Theater* (*Dirección General de Cinematografía y Teatro*), he acted in compliance with the minister of information and tourism, Manuel Fraga Iribarne in order to introduce the policy of *opening* (*apertura*); in film industry the criteria of artistic aspects and quality became substantial. Due to the clear regulations, the conspicuous standards of censorship and the friendly relations of García Escudero with film makers, ideology was temporarily relegated to the background. At the same time, that group of the regime (the *bunker*) which considered this opening as an extreme liberalization, kept the director-general and the film industry under constant pressure, they strived to smuggle back the topics of the 40's to the film policy of the 60's. They met only with partial success.

It can be proved with the case of the Spain of the 40's and 50's that the Franco regime used film policy as one of the most important channels for transmitting its ideology. Therefore, the products of this film policy, the films themselves, can be useful and valuable sources for historians that investigate this period.

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